



Testimony of Sarah King In Support

LD 2117 Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Amend Its Rule Chapter 101: MaineCare Benefits Manual, Chapter II, Section 21, Home and Community Benefits for Members with Intellectual Disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorder

January 28, 2026

Good afternoon, Senator Ingwersen, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LD 2117.

My name is Sarah King, I reside in West Baldwin and operate Residential Resources of Maine out of Westbrook. I am the Director of Residential Supports, supporting 25 individuals in the Southern Maine area.

Our agency has provided group home and shared living support throughout Maine since 1995. I submit this testimony today to express my strong support for LD 2117, and to provide firsthand accounts of how individuals receiving Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) have been negatively impacted by the strict enforcement of the single-person vacancy regulation. I appreciate the opportunity to serve as a voice for several of the individuals we support who have been impacted by this.

Residential Resources supports many individuals who rely on consistency, safety, and established relationships to maintain their health and emotional well-being. We currently support three individuals who have experienced trauma, instability, and fear directly resulting from the regulatory framework that forces individuals to leave their homes when providers cannot, despite exhaustive efforts, locate appropriate and safe housemates within the required timelines.

While I will not use this testimony to litigate the systemic barriers involved in matching individuals with appropriate housemates, though those barriers are substantial and deserving of later review—I must underscore the real human consequences of the current rule.

Examples of Harm Under the Current Regulation:

One woman, after living peacefully in her home by herself, without a housemate for nearly twenty years after leaving Pineland, faced the threat of eviction and possible re-institutionalization through no fault of her own or her support provider. Her stability, safety, and long-standing relationships were jeopardized by circumstances entirely outside of her control.

Another individual was ultimately forced to leave her home when she could not be paired with a new housemate within the prescribed timeframe after her previous housemate suffered an injury

and had to move. She was given two unacceptable options: leave her trusted provider of twenty-three years or leave her home and move in with unfamiliar roommates. She chose the latter, but the emotional and psychological toll was significant and unnecessary.

The most concerning example involves a woman in her late fifties living with dementia and significant memory loss, who had already endured the death of one housemate and the departure of another due to medical needs that exceeded the DSPs' ability to safely support.

Over many months, our team issued weekly or often daily vendor call inquiries to locate a safe and appropriate housemate. Responses were rare and often came from individuals no longer seeking placement or who were not a suitable match. Despite exhaustive efforts, the regulatory timeframe expired, and she was issued a formal notice of eviction and termination of services.

Due to her cognitive disabilities, the notice was profoundly confusing and frightening to her. After the final 30-day extension period expired, she was forced to leave her longtime home.

On the day of her move, she sat in the passenger seat of her program manager's car, visibly dysregulated and tearful, repeatedly asking:

“Why are you taking my bed?”

“Where am I going?”

There was no realistic or compassionate way to try and again explain to her that the move was required by regulation—not need, not safety, not her choice- she simply could not process or remember what had been explained to her previously.

Ultimately, through extraordinary support from her direct care team, she adjusted to her new environment at a location still operated by Residential Resources. However, the trauma she experienced was completely preventable.

While it is impossible to know with certainty whether the provisions, extensions and additional review steps described in LD 2117 would have prevented these situations, the bill represents a critical step toward restoring the principles of HCBS: autonomy, choice, stability, and the right to live in one's home with dignity.

LD 2117 offers necessary flexibility and additional time for providers to locate safe and appropriate housemates, thereby reducing the risk of disruptive, involuntary moves. It moves Maine closer to a service system that respects individual rights and prioritizes stability over rigid administrative timelines.

On behalf of Residential Resources of Maine and the individuals we serve, I urge the Committee to support LD 2117. The current single-vacancy rule has caused real, measurable harm. LD 2117 is a meaningful step toward protecting vulnerable individuals from unnecessary trauma and ensuring that they can continue to live safely in homes of their choosing, with the providers and supports they trust.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to support LD 2117.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized name, located at the bottom of the page.